

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 SY-05 MCT-01
SSM-03 /096 W
-----151453Z 039223 /44

R 151145Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6050
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1717

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR TS XF PLO
SUBJECT: CONGRESS OF PALESTINIAN WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS
UNION CLOSES UN TUNIS

REF: TUNIS 1498

1. THE SECOND GENERAL CONGRESS OF PALESTINIAN WRITERS
AND JOURNALISTS UNION CLOSED ON MARCH 9 AFTER FIVE-DAY
SERIES OF MEETINGS AT NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF TUNISIAN
DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY (PSD) IN TUNIS. ACCORDING TO UNION'S
SECRETARY GENERAL, NAJI ALLOCUHE, THEME OF MEETINGS WAS
"INDEPENDENCE OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT -- SOLE GUARANTEE
OF THE CONTINUATION OF THE FIGHT FOR LIBERATION." CONGRESS
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WAS DIVIDED INTO FOUR COMMITTEES: POLITICAL, FINANCIAL,
PROFESSIONAL AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION. LITTLE IS KNOWN
ABOUT WHAT ACTUALLY TRANSPIRED IN THESE GROUPS AS FORMAL
COMMITTEE REPORTS WERE NOT PUBLISHED. SUPPOSEDLY, REPORTS
OF FINANCIAL, PROFESSION AND INTERNAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEES
WERE VOTED UPON AND ACCEPTED IN CLOSING PLENARY ON MARCH 9.
NO FINAL ACTION WAS TAKEN ON A POLITICAL COMMITTEE

DRAFT REPORT. ACCORDING TO ONE PRESS STORY, IN ORDER TO AVOID "A CERTAIN MORAL CONDEMNATION OF PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL", CONGRESS MANAGERS DECIDED TO SUBMIT POLITICAL COMMITTEE REPORT TO UNION'S NEWLY ELECTED SECRETARIAT, WHICH WAS TO CONSIDER THE REPORT IN PRIVATE ON MARCH 10, AFTER CLOSING OF CONGRESS.

2. CONGRESS PRESIDENT MOHAMED ECHAAR IN CLOSING PLENARY BREAD BRIEF PRESS COMMUNIQUE EMPHASIZING "SERIOUS CHARACTER WHICH MARKED DEBATES." HE CLAIMED THAT NEW NATIONAL UNITY HAD BEEN ACHIEVED AND THAT THE "PRIMARY ROLE WHICH PLO PLAYS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AS SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE" HAD BEEN RECONFIRMED. ONLY EXCERPTS OF THIS COMMUNIQUE WERE PUBLISHED. IN SAME PLENARY SESSION, MAJED ABU CHARAR, INTRODUCED AS PLO INFORMATION REPRESENTATIVE, REITERATED RECURRENT THEME EXPRESSED DURING CONGRESS "THAT PALESTINIAN PEOPLE REJECT OUTRIGHT ALL FOREIGN POLITICAL INTERFERENCE." (SEVERAL EARLIER SPEAKERS HAD SPECIFICALLY WARNED OF THOSE ARABS WHO WOULD TRY TO IMPOSE "A SOLUTION TO MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM" AT EXPENSE OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.)

3. USSR RECEIVED SPECIAL NOTE FOR CONSISTENT SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN CAUSE. U.S. WAS GIVEN RELATIVELY EASY TREATMENT, AT LEAST IN PUBLISHED ACCOUNTS OF PROCEEDINGS. AS TO CONCRETE RESULTS, PRESS ACCOUNTS HAVE INDICATED ONLY THAT SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS TAKEN WERE TO CREATE A SECTION OF WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS UNION IN "OCCUPIED PALESTINE" AND ELECTION OF NEW SECRETARIAT (NAMES TO FOLLOW SEPTEL).
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4. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT 166 PALESTINIAN WRITERS AND JOURNALISTS ATTENDED CONFERENCE. (SMALL TEMPEST EXPLODED WHEN DELEGATION OF 43 PERSONS ARRIVED TO REPRESENT UNION'S CHAPTER IN ALGIERS DEMANDING TO BE SEATED IN TOTO. CONFERENCE MANAGERS REFUSED TO GIVE GROUP OF "INDEPENDENTS" SUCH IMPORTANT VOICE IN DELIBERATIONS AND COMPROMISE WAS EVENTUALLY WORKED OUT WHERE SEVEN WERE ADMITTED AS PARTICIPANTS AND REST APPARENTLY ASSUMED "OBSERVER" STATUS.) FOREIGN DELEGATIONS FROM WRITERS UNIONS IN MOST ARAB COUNTRIES ALSO ATTENDED AS OBSERVERS, AS DID DELEGATIONS FROM SUDAN, YUGOSLAVIA, ITALY, USSR, FINLAND, POLAND, BULGARIA, SENEGAL, ERITREA, AND VIETNAM.

5. CONGRESS ADVANCE BILLING HAD INDICATED THAT YASSER ARAFAT, GEORGE HABBASH, NAYER HAWATMEH AND OTHER PALESTINIAN NOTABLES WERE TO PUT IN APPEARANCES AND USE OCCASION TO HOLD PRE-CAIRO PALESTINIAN "SUMMIT," BUT AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THEY DID NOT COME TO TUNIS AND NO SUCH MEETINGS

TOOK PLACE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 1717

6. THE MOST WELL-KNOWN PALESTINIAN POLITICAL FIGURES KNOWN TO SHOW UP WERE ABOU MAHER AND ABOU DAOUD, WHO BOTH WERE GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE IN TUNISIAN MEDIA. ABOU MAHER WAS ACCORDED SPECIAL HONOR OF BEING SEATED BETWEEN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND TUNISIAN INTERIOR MINISTER TAHAR BELKHODJA AT LUNCHEON FOR CONGRESS PARTICIPANTS GIVEN BY PRESIDENT AT PALACE ON MARCH 4. PALESTINIAN "NATIONAL ANTHEM" WAS PLAYED AT LUNCHEON, WHICH, ACCORDING TO PAPERS, WAS FIRST TIME IT HAD BEEN PERFORMED BEFORE A CHIEF OF STATE. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA, IN A PREPARED STATEMENT, WHICH HE DELIVERED FROM PODIUM AFTER LUNCHEON, EXPRESSED HIS AND TUNISIA'S FULL SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE. SAYING THAT TIME FOR "DELIVERANCE" WAS NEAR, BOURGUIBA EXPRESSED PARTICULAR PRAISE FOR YASSER ARAFAT

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AND PLO, AND HE CALLED ON ALL PALESTINIANS TO MAINTAIN UNITY AND DISCIPLINE WITHIN "THEIR ORGANIZATION" IN THESE CRITICAL TIMES.

7. MAHER RESPONDED TO PRESIDENT'S REMARKS BY NOTING THAT THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENCES OF INTEREST IN MIDDLE EAST WHICH IMPEDE REALIZATION OF A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, AND HE COMMENTED THAT POLITICAL ACTION UNACCOMPANIED BY ARMED ACTION IS A WASTE OF TIME. HE EXPRESSED HOPE THAT ALL ARABS UNDERSTAND THIS SO THAT THEY, AS WELL AS THE PALESTINIANS, RECOVER LANDS TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM. HE CLOSED HIS REMARKS BY INVOCATION THAT "WE CAN RECEIVE YOU IN A LIBERATED JERUSALEM." MAHER ALSO STATED IN SEPARATE INTERVIEW THAT PLO POSITION HAS ALREADY BEEN DECIDED BY THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, I.E., REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN RENEWED GENEVA CONFERENCE ON BASIS OF RESOLUTION 242, INSISTENCE ON PLO PARTICIPATION IN ALL CONFERENCES CONCERNING PALESTINIAN CAUSE ON BASIS OF "UN RESOLUTIONS AND UN CHARTER WITHOUT INTERFERENCE FROM ANY PARTY," AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEMOCRATIC PALESTINIAN STATE ON "ALL PARTS OF TERRITORY THAT MIGHT BE LIBERATED."

8. IN INTERVIEW GIVEN TO PSD WEEKLY "DIALOGUE," ABOU DAOUD WAS QUOTED AS SAYING HE DID NOT THINK THE GENEVA TALKS WOULD REOPEN AND THAT EVEN IF THEY DID, TALKS WOULD FAIL BECAUSE OF ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A PROVISIONAL PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT, HE SAID THIS IDEA IS BEING STUDIED ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT THINK IT WOULD HAVE ANY RESULTS.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH STRONG DIFFERENCES AMONG INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS SURFACED FROM TIME TO TIME THROUGHOUT CONGRESS (SADAT GOT SOME PARTICULARLY HARD LICKS) PUBLIC EMPHASIS OF MEETING WAS CLEARLY FOCUSED ON THOSE AREAS IN WHICH GENERAL AGREEMENT COULD BE REACHED (DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE STRUGGLE, GOAL OF REACQUISITION OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES
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AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PALESTINIAN STATE, UNITY OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, SUPPORT FOR PLO ORGANIZATION AS LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL CURRENTS OF OPINION WITHIN PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY AND REJECTION OF "FOREIGN" INTERFERENCE IN DETERMINING PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S DESTINY). CONFERENCE LEADERSHIP APPEARED TO TRY TO KEEP FORMAL DELIBERATIONS WITHIN LIMITED MANDATE AND AWAY FROM CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, AS EVIDENCED BY DECISION NOT TO SUBMIT POLITICAL REPORT TO PLENARY FOR FINAL VOTE. FREQUENT REFERENCE WAS MADE TO IMPORTANCE OF PALESTINIAN NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING IN CAIRO, WHICH WAS CHARACTERIZED

IN LOCAL PRESS AS THE SECOND--AND MOST DIFFICULT--TEST
OF PALESTINIAN UNITY AFTER SUCCESSES OF WRITERS AND
JOURNALISTS UNION CONFERENCE IN TUNIS. WHILE WE CANNOT
ATTEST AS TO HOW "SUCCESSFUL" THIS TUNIS MEETING WAS, A
MAIN OBJECTIVE OF CONFERENCE MANAGERS WAS NOT TO COMPLICATE
MATTERS IN CAIRO. IN THIS RESPECT, THEY SEEM TO HAVE
SUCCEEDED.

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Message Attributes

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